

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC028599
Inspection date	31/05/2012
Inspector	Christy Wannop
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/01/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately-owned children's home which provides residential care for up to four young people with learning difficulties who may also have a physical disability. Some children still in full-time education stay beyond the age of 18 when they move into adult placements.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This service provides good quality care to children who have learning and physical disabilities and complex health needs. Children make good progress with effective, sensitive support. Staff put safe-working guidance into practice and consequently children are safe. Relationships between staff, children and their families and placing authority are good. The registered person is currently managing the service but is recruiting a full-time manager. She is effective at tackling weakness and securing improvement. This service has the confidence of placing authorities and the support of parents. It has significant strengths in partnership working, sharing care and meeting the needs of children with life limiting conditions and complex health needs. Parents have very high levels of satisfaction with their children's care and describe the service as brilliant. Children do well and have good opportunities to experience success and well-being.

There is a regulatory shortfall in making sure that HMCI is always notified of any significant event in the home. Further recommendations for improvement are largely focused around documentation: of recruitment practice; maintaining current information in the Statement of Purpose; for the formal reporting of the quality of care, and also in ensuring privacy in bathrooms.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	ensure, if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 take place, without delay notify the persons indicated in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30)	31/05/2012

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- approve the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide and review them at least annually. Specifically, to ensure that staffing information, the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home, are kept up to date (NMS 13.3)
- ensure risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel by ensuring children have proper privacy in bathrooms. For example, that bathroom doors have locks that can promote privacy whilst enabling swift staff entry in an emergency (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the record of the recruitment and vetting checks shows the date on which each check was completed and who carried out the check (NMS16.4)
- have a system in place which allows for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6 in order to improve the quality of care. It will be good practice for these reports to be completed at six monthly intervals and a copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within 28 days of completion, and specifically to include outcomes of consultation. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children enjoy, achieve, contribute and develop while they live at this home. They develop a positive self-view, do well at school, and enjoy good health and healthy lifestyles. They are active participants in the community and have strong social and family networks and opportunities to develop friendships outside the home and staff team. Parents are positive their children are happy living at the home. One parent said, 'it's like a family' and described the relationships with other young people positively, saying, 'he has friends there'. A parent was very glad that staff celebrate things with their child, 'they gave her a lovely birthday party.'

Children go to school and make progress in their sensory development, and gain life, communication and independence skills. They have everyday opportunities for new experiences as would any peer and they get out and about in the community, pursuing active interesting lifestyles and hobbies: acting; photography; cooking; the countryside; shows and events; youth clubs and good holidays. Their families are welcome and they also go home regularly. They have good consistent care because staff, parents and professionals communicate well and achieve agreement. This provides security.

Young people make successful transitions to independence and adult life. They move successfully into young adulthood and achieve independence that takes account of their disabilities and strengths. A placing authority professional talked about how well the service had supported parents and children in transition; reducing their anxiety about leaving familiar people and places and moving to adult services. Such is the level of confidence and satisfaction from parents about the quality of care that some parents say they would like the responsible person to look into creating an adult service so that their children can continue to be cared for by the organisation. One said, 'I can't see her living anywhere else.'

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

The service delivers good care to children with complex health needs, learning and physical disabilities.

A key strength of the service is the way it works collaboratively and openly with families and placing authorities. The service supports continued shared care, with families and with hospices for children with compromised health, and this means that children have continuity of care and emotional security. There are extremely good arrangements to deliver the correct care for children with complex health needs, including robust, safe arrangements for administering medication. Staff competently carry out nursing tasks with proper training, assessment and on the authority of external registered nurses. If children go into hospital, staff stay with the child round the clock, providing reassurance in the way a parent would. Parents say they appreciate this. Some parents lead on the health care of their child and say the service is, 'on the right road' in sharing information.

Systems for placement planning and prompt review are good and detailed in-house care plans add detail to the local authority plan. These plans describe children's strengths and preferences and aim to deliver close care while positively promoting independence and self-esteem. Professionals say that staff work with them to meet children's needs. A placing social worker described a strength of the service as in working as a, 'team around the family, rather than just the child.' Relationships between adults and children are respectful, affectionate and satisfying. Staff communicate sensitively with children, using speech, touch and sign language. A parent said that she knew her child feels comfortable because they see her react

positively to staff, 'she beams at them'. Staff seek children's views in key worker meetings and in everyday life; children's choice is central to the way they provide care.

The service challenges exclusion and prejudice and supports positive inclusive educational experiences. Staff value children's educational development and achievements in a holistic way. They translate educational aims into learning life skills that are worked into children's daily experience. So children practice writing skills, hand-eye coordination and concentration in ordinary leisure activities. Parents say that staff are responsive and determined for their children; they say staff are, 'really prompt to sort things out' and, 'they give her 100%'. The service promotes positive integrated leisure in the real community. Parents are pleased with the level of activities and opportunities and that disability is not a barrier, 'They take her out and about to different places.'

The home is a good place for children to live and parents like the homely feeling. It is fully adapted so that children with mobility needs can move freely upstairs, downstairs and into the garden. There is a stair lift, hoists and adapted baths and showers. While all young people need adult help with bathing, not all bathroom doors have safe-use locks and so young people's privacy may be compromised. There is plenty of light, open space in the open-plan kitchen, dining and lounge area. There is a separate room full of activities and resources for play and creativity. Children can choose to be peaceful and private in their well-furnished bedrooms or sociable with other children and adults. There are sensors and monitors that help to keep children safe at night and guidelines for use are clear within placement plans. Good health and safety and fire checks, including at night, mean that the environment is safe and secure for children.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Arrangements to keep children safe are sound. However, whilst recruitment checks are satisfactory, there is not currently a thorough record of a robust process. For example, records do not always show that telephone checks with referees, and of qualifications have been carried out. The registered person has reviewed arrangements, procedures and processes to support safe recruitment of staff and has engaged an external specialist human resource body to advise on this.

Children are safe in the environment and in their activities and everyday life. There are useful, individualised risk assessments that reduce unnecessary harm while promoting healthy opportunities for independence and adventure. The environment is physically safe and secure without being restrictive. Children do not run away, although there is no restriction to their leaving the home. They need one-to-one support and good staffing levels mean that children are always supervised.

Staff and children get on well and children learn about social behaviour from staff who act as positive adult role models. There is an imaginative reflective approach

when children behave in ways which harm others or challenge. Children are encouraged to sit quietly with staff and talk or think about their actions and the consequences. Restraint is not used. A requirement for better sanctions recording has been met and there is good guidance for staff, which works in practice to ensure all incidents are fully recorded and demonstrate that children are learning from discussion about consequences.

The registered person protects children through well-established joint working arrangements with local children's services and consults about safeguarding concerns. Staff implement their responsibilities to protect and safeguard children and are particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities. Professional partners report an open transparent approach when any issues arise. They say they are confident in the registered person's open and receptive approach and their commitment to cooperative working in the best interest of the child. A placing authority professional described the safeguarding practice as good and that children are, 'in safe hands'.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

This is a service that is closely managed and monitored by the registered person. Whilst there is a vacant post for the manager, effective arrangements have been made and the registered person has been in day-to-day charge of the home since the previous manager resigned at the end of March. This meets regulatory requirements. Arrangements to appoint a new manager are progressing and the registered person has kept Ofsted well informed about efforts to recruit a suitable person.

The home has, in taking positive action in response to the previous four regulatory shortfalls, demonstrated its capacity for improvement. Concerns and complaints are acted upon and are now properly recorded. The placing authority appreciates the open response to communication and reports stronger relationships with parents as a consequence of the prompt and supportive approach to resolving their issues. The registered person makes use of monthly monitoring reports and these are also now sent regularly to Ofsted, although are not necessary while she is in day-to-day control of the home.

Basic quality assurance review reports have been sent to Ofsted to fulfil the previous regulatory requirement, but these have not reflected the good level of consultation that is currently embedded in the review process or the frequency recommended by statutory guidance. The registered person holds stakeholder consultation meetings regularly so that parents, placing authorities and partners in care, such as health and education professionals, can influence the development of the service. They gave very positive views of the service.

The registered person ensures the service is well resourced, and provides a well-equipped staff team, who have good training relevant to the needs of the children.

However, the Statement of Purpose does not include an up-to-date statement about the number, qualifications and experience of people working at the children's home. Management support to staff, through professional supervision and appraisal, is good. Staff say this assists them to practice sensitive, skilled childcare that meets children's needs and promote their good development and well-being. Parents and professionals say they always feel welcomed by friendly, 'honest and straightforward staff.'

Children's records are clear and up to date and reflect their real lives and their whole personalities, strengths and vulnerabilities. Records contain pictures, simplified text and so are more likely to be of interest to young people later in life. The service supports children in crisis well, but a recent significant event was notified to all other parties but not to Ofsted.

The placing authority is very happy with the quality of care and their 'open door' policy. The service fulfils its Statement of Purpose well and achieves its aims. One parent said they, 'couldn't ask for a better place' for their child. The home is operating in accordance with its conditions of registration and the registered person remains fit for registration.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.